



PLANNING COMMISSION SYNOPSIS

Thursday, August 11, 2016

**CALL TO
ORDER**

Vice Chairperson Spiess called the Planning Commission meeting to order at
6:00 PM in the McLeod Conference Room of the Bloomington Civic Plaza.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Spiess, Batterson, Bennett, Goodrum, Solberg, Snyder, Swanson
STAFF PRESENT: Markegard, Grout, Pelinka, Schmidt, O'Day

ITEM 1
6:00 p.m.

APPLICANT: City of Bloomington
REQUEST: Introduction - Alejandra Pelinka, Bloomington Creative
Placemaking & Engagement Director

DISCUSSION:

Alejandra Pelinka described the South Loop District and its key assets and opportunities. Within an average year, the South Loop attracts thousands of visitors, hotel guests, residents and employees. The South Loop vision is to transform a suburban area into a walkable urban neighborhood that attracts residents, employees, hotel guests and visitors by creating unique character and assets. The main goals of the South Loop Plan include transforming the District's character and establishing a distinct identity and sense of place. Creative placemaking efforts will help accomplish these overreaching goals by informing developers and residents of the South Loop identity. Creative placemaking provides opportunities for people to explore, gather and linger and creates a place with distinct character and identity. It would also increase tax revenues, encourage business growth and drive tourism. Since the launch of the South Loop District Plan in 2013, the City received funding from the National Endowment of the Arts to integrate art and continue long-term placemaking efforts. Pelinka described several creative placemaking efforts that have already been implemented in South Loop.

She said the Creative Placemaking and Engagement Director helps identify the South Loop brand and engages the community and stakeholders. Next steps include working on placemaking efforts with the MOA Transit Station, utility box wraps and Superbowl projects and creating a Creative Placemaking Commission that will be comprised of residents and businesses in Bloomington.

ITEM 2
6:18 p.m.

APPLICANT: City of Bloomington
REQUEST: Neighborhood Commercial Study

DISCUSSION:

Markegard presented a recap of the Neighborhood Commercial Centers Study and scoring criteria:

- Purpose
 - o Markegard stated the City Council’s strategic priorities include “renewal of priority neighborhood commercial nodes”. This has been a strategic priority in the past as well. Over the past couple decades, the HRA has revitalized four commercial nodes. Markegard presented slides depicting revitalized portions of 98th and Lyndale, France and Old Shakopee, 84th and Lyndale and Penn American. The last prioritization effort was labeled the “string of pearls” and prioritized different commercial nodes based on priority level. Improvements have taken place in all of the top priority areas. But redevelopment can be opportunity driven as well. Penn American is an example of that. Even though it was listed as a C priority, the opportunity that presented itself in the area caused it to move forward.
- Chronology for the Study
 - o March 8 – HRA study meeting
 - o April 7 – PC study meeting
 - o April 11 – CC study meeting
 - o May – June – Staff completed study
 - o July 12 – HRA presented findings
 - o August 11 – PC presented findings
 - o August 22 – CC will be presented findings
 - o Fall 2016 – HRA begins next steps of implementation
- Neighborhood Commercial Areas
 - o The study initially evaluated 19 candidates with retail focus
 - o Filtered out the commercial centers by the following criteria:
 - Areas must encompass at least 5 acres
 - Majority of the node must be zoned commercial
 - Exclude areas covered by district plans - (South Loop, Penn American and Normandale Lake) as they are already prioritized
 - Exclude areas that received recent HRA investment (France & Old Shakopee, 84th & Lyndale, 98th & Lyndale) as they are already prioritized
 - Exclude areas consisting predominantly of regional-oriented land uses, as they are more likely to be enhanced or redeveloped without public funds
 - Removed Normandale Village at the request of the City Council, given its positive condition
 - o The remaining eight commercial centers include: Amsden Ridge Center, Countryside Center, 90th and Penn, Central Lyndale, American Blvd and Nicollet, American Blvd and Portland, Old Cedar and Old Shakopee Road and 98th Street and Nicollet Avenue.
- Scoring criteria
 - o Scoring factors were grouped under three headings to assist in prioritizing the neighborhood commercial areas

- Need
- Impact
- Challenges

Schmidt presented on how staff scored all eight sites. The scores were relative to each area and the scores reflected the average across all parcels. Each criteria was scored with a 0, 1, and 2 score with a weight of 1, 2, and 3. The higher the overall score, the higher need for potential redevelopment, revitalization or HRA assistance. Schmidt provided two examples on qualitative and quantitative scoring.

Scoring was challenging as it is subjective plus qualitative factors made it difficult to evaluate an area with a large number of sites, especially at 98th Street and Nicollet. One parcel could score relatively low, while another parcel in the same center could score relatively high. Solberg asked how that would be evaluated if there are many qualitative differences in one area. Markegard said it makes sense use different strategies for different parts of the same neighborhood commercial center. In fact, staff recommends that approach in several cases, which Grout will explain.

Markegard gave an overview of the scores. He noted that American Blvd and Portland, 98th Street and Nicollet and Old Cedar and Old Shakopee Road scored the highest in the study, which means more need and opportunity for redevelopment and revitalization. These three centers were within the top four under the need and impact headings; however, American and Portland was the only center to score within the top three under the challenges heading.

Markegard noted that some believe Bloomington is over retail. With the addition of large big box stores that were not present in the 1950s and 1960s when retail nodes were established, there is less demand for smaller-scale neighborhood retail uses. Staff looked at the potential for commercial centers to move away from retail uses and toward other uses, especially residential. He displayed a slide depicting where residential opportunities were the greatest in each node.

Grout presented on the neighborhood center prioritization and strategies.

Priority A	Priority B	Priority C
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American & Portland • 98th & Nicollet • Old Cedar & Old Shakopee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countryside Center • American & Nicollet • 90th & Penn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Lyndale • Amsden Ridge

He said the HRA would review opportunities within the Priority A areas first, but still have the option to assist an area in priority B or C if an opportunity presents itself.

Grouted reviewed potential HRA assistance strategies within the top three priority commercial centers.

- American and Portland
 - o The east side of American Blvd and Portland Avenue is currently being redeveloped to improve the parking lot, sidewalks, landscaping and add a new anchor tenant.
 - o Portland and American is important for the residential neighborhood to the south.
 - o The west side of American Blvd and Portland Avenue has access challenges.
 - Changes to this center could focus on renovations on the north half to include the façade, parking lot, internal pedestrian access, landscaping and rear loading area
 - With redevelopment of the southern half to improve the site layout and appearance on the corner
 - o These two centers are heavily utilized by residents walking from Richfield as well.
- 98th and Nicollet
 - o Potential redevelopment of the southeast quadrant
 - Would require compilation of parcels
 - Potential change of use to multi-family or mixed use development
 - Bury overhead power lines
 - Add boulevard to public sidewalk
 - o Renovations to the southwest quadrant could include façade, parking lot and landscaping updates
 - o The north side of 98th Street is in good condition and any changes there would be market driven
- Old Cedar and Old Shakopee
 - o The Engineering Department plans to improve the intersection at Old Cedar and Old Shakopee Road.
 - o Some lots are currently for sale and the City could acquire land to bank it.
 - o The northwest quadrant includes a large strip mall with a condominium form of ownership. There is a possibility for mixed-use or senior housing in this area that would benefit the surrounding residential neighborhood.
 - o Renovations to the southeast quadrant could include façade, parking lot and landscaping updates.

In the fall, the HRA will meet with landowners, review HRA financial resources, gather input from developers and seek partners to help assess market demand.

Grout posed the following questions to the Commission:

- Questions on study methodology?
- Comments on the proposed prioritization?
- Comments on the potential strategies?

Snyder said that although the qualitative factors may be subjective, it provides a good basis for discussion. It creates a rubric with which to analyze and compare the areas. She finds the approach very helpful.

Batterson was concerned that American Blvd and Nicollet may be overlooked in the prioritization. American Blvd has become Bloomington's central corridor. There is potential to tie in American Blvd and Portland Avenue with Nicollet.

Solberg was concerned about the fit with the neighborhood need. How do you determine what's best for the neighborhood? Grout stated the redevelopment could include landscaping or façade improvements so that the existing tenants aren't "priced out". Markegard noted that residents often express a strong desire for "mom and pop" type businesses as opposed to chains. "Mom and pop" businesses typically need low rents and usually can't afford space in newly constructed buildings. A big concern with scrape

and build redevelopment is that only chains will be able to afford the rent, pricing out mom and pop businesses. Hence the importance of using revitalization strategies in some cases rather than full redevelopment. Goodrum noted that once one tenant improves the property, it could create a trend for others to do similar improvements.

Spiess liked that the strategies address the services and needs for families in the area. The strategies are driven by understandable factors. Swanson noted there could be great potential for unique development at a remnant parcel on the northeast quadrant of Old Cedar and Old Shakopee Road. The roadway improvement could create a small and unusually shaped parcel but that could yield an interesting small building. Grout noted the Old Cedar Bridge could bring increased bicycle activity to the intersection. Solberg discussed the Red Line route and that there had been discussion of routing the line through Old Cedar and Old Shakopee Road but the lack of density caused route planners to reject that routing. It is important to evaluate proximity to transit lines. Goodrum asked if there is a possibility to hire a private firm to conduct a market study. Grout said it is an option.

Markegard asked the Commission about American Blvd and Nicollet. Spiess noted that Kennedy students often utilize the area and Nicollet and 98th. She sees Nicollet and 98th as a higher redevelopment/revitalization priority than American and Nicollet. Also, the relationship between Lyndale and Nicollet Avenues in Minneapolis is unique and there could be an opportunity to continue those corridors into Bloomington. Batterson gave Eat Street as an example of an area with many unique ethnic restaurants and retail stores. Goodrum also noted that HRA should be cautious of using monies along American Blvd as it is a regional area with higher chances for market driven redevelopment.

ITEM 3
7:08 p.m.

APPLICANT: City of Bloomington
REQUEST: Review Planning Commission Rules of Procedure

DISCUSSION:

Markegard reviewed the ex parte contacts and conflicts of interest sections of the Rules. The Commission's previously adopted ex parte contact rules are meant to keep discussion in the public record and to avoid any undue influence. If ex parte contacts do occur, those contacts should be disclosed prior to Planning Commission discussion of any given item. The Commission agreed that ex parte contacts has not been an issue over the past year as there have been very few. Solberg noted that his work may relate to some items at the Planning Commission but he is comfortable with the word "should" in the language. Goodrum also agreed with the proposed language in the Rules. Swanson asked about the possibility of a Bloomington email address. Markegard noted there has been some discussion with Information Systems about Commissioners having a City e-mail account but it was decided against. Staff suggests creating a personal email address for Planning Commission related news. The concern is that a work email could make public data requests and e-discovery more difficult while potentially exposing non-Planning Commission related e-mail to discovery. Staff will continue to look into the issue and best practices.

Markegard noted that conflicts of interest arise when a spouse or family member might directly or indirectly gain from a planning decision. In that case, Commissioners may discuss whether there is an actual or perceived conflict with the Planning Manager or City Attorney and the person must abstain from participating in that item and must leave the chambers during that item.

Markegard asked if the Commission desired any changes to these sections or to any other sections in the Rules of Procedure. The Commission did not have any changes.

ITEM 4
7:16 p.m.

APPLICANT:	City of Bloomington
REQUEST:	Appoint Planning Commission representative to the Forward 2040 Advisory Committee

DISCUSSION:

Goodrum has expressed interest in participating on the Forward 2040 Advisory Committee. The Planning Commission agreed to appoint Goodrum as their representative on the Forward 2040 Advisory Committee.

ITEM 5
7:17 p.m.

APPLICANT:	City of Bloomington
REQUEST:	Election of Planning Commission Officers

DISCUSSION:

By secret ballot, the Commission elected officers for the next year as follows:

Chair: Kelley Spiess

Vice Chair: Budd Batterson

Chairperson Spiess appointed Liz O'Day as Secretary to the Planning Commission with all commissioners voting approval via a voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 7:21p.m.

Prepared By: EO Reviewed By: GM, JS

Approved By Planning Commission: August 25, 2016